

VENDOR CERTIFICATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Technical Questions

GENERAL

50 IAC 23-12-4 (titled System and Data Security) states: "The property tax management system must log activities of all system administrators.". Is this referring to system users with more power than others (who would do things like system table maintenance and unusual financial corrections), or is it referring to IT staff in the county that would be servicing the system on the server (doing things like database backups, upgrades, and general troubleshooting)?

The property tax management system must maintain a record of all activities in the system by any user regardless of level of authorization. This particular section identifies the need to log activities of system administrators as defined in 50 IAC 23-2-39.

I talked with DLGF about the procedure for requesting a change to 50 IAC 23-12-2 (6), which states "Users must be automatically locked out of the system after fifteen (15) minutes of inactivity." We implemented the password and login requirements several months ago and the "automatic lockout" is causing our customers great frustration. County officials understand the rationale behind this type of security requirement, but they maintain that the timeframe is much too short. Whether a county office has 2 employees or 20, the users all get interruptions (phone calls, customers at the counter, etc.) that frequently result in the user not having any activity on the system for 15 minutes. The frustration level is high at being logged out of the system dozens of times a day.

The DLGF has decided to accept the use of the Window System security activating after 15 minutes of non-use as compliance with this portion of the rule. This would allow the user to return to their workstation, simply enter the Windows password and return to work in the tax management system, without having lost their work in progress.

1.4.2 requires finding a record by entering the first few letters of the street name. This is problematic for the following reasons: Since the data in PARCEL.TXT has the street number and name in the same field (ie. The number and name are NOT in separate fields), I have used a routine to extract the street name by looking at the second "word" in the field (in this context, the "word" is the second group of characters, with each group separated by a space. This will work for most addresses (ie. 123 Main St. would return "Main") but it will NOT return the correct street name for addresses such as 788 - 790 Park Rd or 746 & 748 Central Ave. because the actual street name is the third "word" in the first example and the fourth "word" in the second example. Another possibility would be to use the second to last "word." However, this would fail for an address like 3225 Park Ave W because it would return Ave instead of Park. Will the routine I have described for defining the street name as the second "word" in the address be acceptable?

It is the responsibility of the vendor to determine how to manipulate their software in order to demonstrate the functionality of the software to meet the requirements of the test.

I have been working on the export files and discovered that there seems to be an error in the way the header record is defined. In 50 IAC 23-20-4, section 4(a) calls for a field length of 18 which should contain "FILENAME: " plus the name of the file being exported. Since "FILENAME: " is 10 characters including the space after the colon, this only leaves 8 characters for the filename. However, VALIDSALES and STATISTICS are both longer than

8. I can put VALIDSAL or STATISTI in the field and still name the file correctly (ie. VALIDSALES.TXT). Is this acceptable?

DLGF agrees that this is an issue within the Rule and will include it in the next round of revisions. In the meantime, it is acceptable to use VALIDSAL and STATISTI in the field along with the correct overall file name.

In 4.4 they ask for security levels as defined in 50 IAC 23-13-4 , but we talked about having only 3 levels (read-only, normal user, administrator). Please confirm that this is acceptable.

In test 4.4 vendors are required to follow each step accordingly. You are correct that there should be administrator security and read-only security levels. In addition, there should be sufficient security 'utilities' to allow differentiation between systems users based on their position. For example, the county should be able to designate that the front desk is given input rights, but not update or delete; supervisors are given input and update rights, but not delete; and managers are given input, update and delete rights. The security needs may vary depending on specific type of system and the county's needs.

As we move through the process of modifying our software to meet the certification requirements we came across a snag with regard to the audit trail transaction log capabilities. Specifically, the Rule requires that we track the "terminal identification." This terminology is specific to older client-server architecture and is not applicable to our web-based product. This would normally involve a computer name or machine id, neither of which is available to us in a web-based application. We CAN provide the IP address of the machine making the changes. Our question is whether or not this will be acceptable according to a proper reading of the Rule. 50 IAC 23-9-1

Vendors should attempt to provide the Host Name through the DNS translation. If the application uses a static IP, then the IP address should be provided.

50 IAC 23-14-1 Capture and maintenance of data on the tax and billing record (date and timestamp of record changes): This function persists on the specific database record. Is this sufficient?

Yes, the application user should be able to see the date and time. The last user id to update the record should also be visible to users with appropriate security (Supervisors, Managers, etc.).

What tests do we need to be able to demonstrate in the System and Integration Testing Scenarios?

For the certification process in 2008, these tests will not be required. These tests will be the basis for the local certification process which will occur in 2009. The certification process in 2008 will be looking at each software package individually by using the Assessment or Tax and Billing testing scenarios.

ASSESSMENT

There seems to be a discrepancy in the requirements for importing and exporting files. According to the grid (test 4.5), Sales ratio software only needs to import PARCEL.TXT. However, two of the files that need to be exported (STATISTICS.TXT and SALEDISC.TXT) require data that is NOT in PARCEL.TXT.

The matrix within the testing scenarios document indicates the imports and exports required to be demonstrated for certification. However, we realize that there may be predecessors to those steps which involve your inputting or importing of data that you would have received from your client counties. It is okay for you to prepare this in advance of your test.

2.7.2 requires that data "be stored off-line in ASCII format." Is this different than 2.12.2(Data for Transmission to the Department), which requires exporting data in ASCII format? If so, please explain.

Test 2.7.2 is ensuring that the system/vendor allows the ability to store appropriate backups.

Test 2.12.2 is ensuring that the system/vendor allows the ability to send appropriate data to the state. Thus, the backup data may include more than is actually transmitted to the state.

My question is regarding 50 IAC 23-4-1 which states the system must computer floor areas. Also, Rule 3-5 states the system must be able to import data according to the file formats (Rule 20). Since the file formats do not include area by floor, how do you suggest we reconcile an import of data with the entire area? Also, do these "areas" include extra features and/or garages?

The areas by floor would be included in the BLDDCTL file. This file allows one or many records per building. Each floor would be entered as a separate BLDDCTL file. If the extra features and/or garages are a separate improvement, they would not be included. However, if the garage is an integral part of the structure it would be included.

TAX AND BILLING

Does 50 IAC 23 11-2 (a)(5)(b) imply the need to track which parcels are geographically adjacent to a specific parcel?

Yes, 50 IAC 23-11-2 does imply the need to track which parcels are geographically adjacent to a specific parcel.

The TABRATES file contains the tax rates by unit that have been approved locally. We certainly understand the requirement to submit the tentative tax rates electronically in the proper file format. 50 IAC 23-7-8 (a) (2) requires the system allow entry of the rates into the system and be overwritten by the DLGF certified rates. The budget process that determines revenue required to be raised by property taxes and the resulting net tax rate, is accomplished outside of the tax and billing system. Our client believes entering the tentative rates into the system tables is an extra step as they will be replaced by the CERTDRATES from the DLGF. Is it acceptable for the tentative rates for the DLGF submission, to be extracted from an alternate source? Is it acceptable for test 3.5 1.c. to generate a rate chart with the certified rates or is there a requirement to have the tentative rates maintained in the tax and billing system?

The software should be able to maintain the information in both the TABRATES file and the CERTDRATES file.

Tax & Billing Test 1.4: To me, the steps seem to be out of order so I would like to confirm that I understand the process you are testing. 1. Access parcel (say owned by ABC Co); a. change the ownership (say to XYZ Co); b. inactivate the record; and c. verify that the inactive record shows that ABC Co owned it prior to XYZ Co.; 2. take the parcel from step #1 and create a split.; 3. Access an inactive parcel and restore it to active status.

In 1b we are inactivating the entire parcel as in the parcel was combined with another parcel. Or is the DLGF presuming the systems have separate owner records and in 1b we are merely inactivating the owner record for ABC Co.?

For the purposes of this test, the sequence of the processes is not important. The primary focus of the test is to demonstrate that the software is capable of completing all of the required processes. If necessary, processes may occur simultaneously.

I have another question for you all, this one regarding 50 IAC 23-7-10 Tax Increment Revenues: [Tax and billing software must be able to do the following:] (2): Reallocate the base by class of property, for example, loss of revenue for residential properties. Could you please explain under what circumstances the need would arise to reallocate the base by class of property? Are we understanding correctly that you want the system to redistribute the Base AV among properties based on property class (vs. anything related to the neutralization)? I presume the Class of Property is that in code list 1.

Reallocation of the base AV by property class is necessary in order to maintain the base level. In comparison, TIF neutralization is calculated in order to protect outstanding bond issues.

50 IAC 23-7-22 states in part that a Tax and billing software must be able to do the following: (2) Record all data required to prepare the following: (A) The certificate of settlement ... 50 IAC 23-11-3 states in part that the reporting system shall be able to print and generate the following reports in an electronic format: (7) Certificate of settlement. Will you please clarify exactly what this report is? We have searched the SBOA manuals for county auditors and treasurers as well as the state auditor settlement instructions and can find no reference to such a report? A SBOA form number would be helpful in tracking this one down.

"Certificate of settlement" refers to Form 105, also known as the Settlement Sheet. This form can be found on the State Auditor's webpage.

50 IAC 23-20-8 Real and Personal Tax Data: 1) What does the 'Government Owned Code' column represent? 2) Homestead Credit: Does this represent the total of the State Homestead Credit, CEDIT and COIT Homestead credit amounts?

The 'Government Owned' column represents whether said property is 'government owned property' and should contain a Y or N. It is not for 'Code 25.' This column may be removed in the future, but should contain the Y or N in the current version. Yes, the Homestead Credit does represent the total of State Homestead Credit, CEDIT & COIT Homestead Credit amounts.

I have concerns with the UTILITYAV and RAILAV file formats. Are these files required to be imported?

DLGF has determined that the import of these files will not be tested at this time. As a result, Test 2.7 will also not be tested.

Our system generates a report showing the various AVs and exemptions/deductions by taxing district. Is this what you are looking for in Test 2.10?

No, the test requires the vendor to produce the official Certificate of Net Assessed Value, which is a standard State Board of Accounts Form. The ability to generate this form will also be important in Test 2.11, as we will test the correlation between the TIF values and how they are reported on the Certificate of Net Assessed Value.

In Test 3.1.4, what are you looking for?

DLGF will be looking to demonstrate that the system can generate a report which shows percentage of taxes paid. The report should have the ability to breakout this data for the county overall, by taxing district, or by taxing unit.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Your file format-system crosswalk shows that a Personal Property system should be able to create a PARCEL file. Can you explain why this is since the PARCEL file is for Real Property only?

The Personal Property System must create (export) a PARCEL file so that the CAMA System can import it. DLGF does not believe it should be incumbent on CAMA Systems to accommodate importing of PERSPROP in order to become a certified CAMA vendor in the state of Indiana and, as such, made the design decision that it should be the responsibility of the Personal Property Vendors to produce a PARCEL file in order to communicate with the overall Property Tax Management System, specifically CAMA.

Does a Personal Property system need to provide an indicator for being located in a TIF Allocation Area, as required in Test 4.5.1?

Yes, the Personal Property system should be able to provide this indicator.

OIL AND GAS

I need to get clarification regarding the proposed changes for oil and gas leases. Currently, these have always been treated like Real property, taxed as real, etc unless they go thru 2 tax sales. Are you now proposing for oil and gas leases as a separate Property type and not a subtype of real? (Referring to the many proposed changes that now say "real property, personal property, and oil and gas". If the intention is that it is still taxed as real, are you only intending for it to be numbered as personal? (I am referring to pg 29 50 IAC 23-8-2). To take it a step further...would the delinquent processing change?

It is not our intent to change oil and gas assessments to PP; they remain as real property assessments as stated by statute. Therefore, they are a subset of the RP assessments.

We are treating the numbering of G&O assessments differently than other real property because they are not tied to any specific real property parcel and therefore do not lend themselves to a RP parcel numbering system that contains a reference to a geographical, or legal, description. They can be numbered in any acceptable fashion as provided in the rule; they do not have to be numbered using the same format as PP.

The delinquent processing would not change.

Lease – The three counties that I work with have not historically used this field as the recordation number and do not have this number readily available. I have advised them to track down the numbers as best they can, enter the data into this field, and move their prior Lease field information to the notes section of my software. I have also advised that at the minimum they get this information for new leases as they are recorded.

We felt that this was a good way to track these leases since they are not tied to any particular geographically described parcel. We will be notifying the counties of this fact when we release the new forms for 2008 this fall.

The number of royalty interest holders far outweighs the number of working interest holders, however both have been capped to 64 interest holders per export. I can't understand the implementation of this cap. This is just the type of thing that is begging for problems with data submissions. All three counties that I work with have wells that have more than 64 royalty interest holders. I can already see being forced to only export the first 64 royalty interest holders, but then the Oil and Gas Allocation Interest Factor field will not sum to 100%. How should we handle this with the export?

We will remove the cap and change it to "1 or many".

There are also interest holders who are exempt, and therefore have an assessed value of 0. See Instruction #4 on the G&O 1 form.

I allow the county to set a minimum assessed value. If this minimum is not reached, the AV is reported as 0.

These is nothing in law that allows the AV to be reduced to 0. All AV's must be carried forward.

Total Assessed Value – My assumption is that this implies the summation of 4D and 5C on the page 1 of the GnO form. Be aware that this number will often vary from the summation of column 4 for the interest holders. Since interest holders are the actual tax payers, each interest holder's assessed value gets rounded. This rounding will cause the summation of column 4 to be different than the sum of 4D and 5C.

We will modify this area to allow rounding.

50 IAC 23-20-7 – Sec 7(a) Oil and Gas Property Number – FYI, this number has nothing to do with getting the assessed value to the Auditors office.

We will modify the layout to add a number for each interest holder. It is necessary for it to be in both the assessment and tax & billing systems in order to compare the assessor's records with the auditor's records.

50 IAC 23-10-3 – Sec 3 – Item (5) A notice of change of assessment has been added for oil and gas assessments. Specifically, what form should be used for this notice? Is this notice intended for producers who miscalculate the assessed values? Or is this for interest holders who appeal the amount of their interest? It's unclear to me when this notice is to be used and to whom it is sent.

The Form 113 should be used for the change of assessment since oil and gas assessments are considered real property by statute. It would only be used if the assessing official did not accept the self-assessment by the taxpayer on the G&O 1 return and would be sent to the preparer (most likely the working interest) of the return.

50 IAC 23-8-2 Indicates that the well and interest holder numbers do not need to adhere to the 18 digit number standard for real property. This is a good change; however, we might still be constrained by the Auditor's system to an 18 digit number. By that I mean, if the Auditors' systems have been programmed to accept oil and gas as real property, they may require an 18 digit number.

If a constraint exists because of the Auditor's system, it is acceptable to use leading or trailing 0's in the number.

Can you provide the required file format for OILGASALL?

OILGASALL is no longer required to be exported.